

Surára
Pakidái

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XI. Reasoning Abilities

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Among the Surára and Pakidái the memory is especially keen, both with respect to the myths and songs, religion, and tribal history, as well as with respect to the flora and fauna and the peculiarities of a landscape (561). Their imitative

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561. In this connection I should like to refer to a remark by Baldus: "By and large as far as the Indian's memory is concerned, he retains only what is useful on the phenominal level accessible to him. He will note each peculiarity of a landscape which he crosses, for that is necessary in order to find the way again and to be able to describe it to his companions. The much lauded 'sense of orientation' of the Indian is nothing but memory" (Baldus, 1931, p. 118).

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Their imitative talent is also noteworthy. For example, upon my arrival, writing and drawing seemed new and mysterious to the Indians. When I handed them my fountain pen and pencils and asked them to draw something, neither the children nor men and women managed to produce anything but the customary serpentine lines, circles, and dots which they otherwise draw with urucú on their bodies, faces, and utilitarian objects. But as soon as I drew trees, houses, and animals for them, they were able to copy these figures after a few attempts. They proved indefatigable in this, and once they had started, they did not want to stop at all. Nor was it long before they /118/ were able to copy letters and finally entire words (562) (563).

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562. Baldus reports the same thing about the Indian tribes in the northeastern Chaco: "Once one has taught the Indians

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562. (cont.)

'to see with our eyes, ' they do not lag
behind us in penmanship and copying"
(Baldus, 1931, p. 118).

563. The experiences of two more investigators should also be cited. First Crevaux, whose following description concerns the Oyampf: "I enjoy reproducing the figures and arabesques with which the people of the village are covered. They are very similar to the carvings in the rock Timéri of the Maroni. It then gives me the idea of cutting a piece of charcoal and giving it to the captain Jean-Louis and asking him to draw in my notebook, which he calls caréta, whereas he calls the drawings that he makes cousiouar. Jean-Louis does not know how to draw very well. On the other hand, young Yami soon makes for me, no longer with charcoal, but with a pencil, drawings of a man, a dog, a tiger, finally all the animals and devils of the country.

"Another Indian reproduces all sorts of arabesques which he is in the habit of painting with genipap.

"Having given some needles to my draftsmen, the question is who will ask me for a pencil in order to blacken the paper. I see that these savages who are accused of being absolutely ignorant of the fine arts draw everything with extraordinary facility;..." /translated from the French/ (Crevaux, 1880, pp. 76/77). -- No less interesting is the statement by Karl von den

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563. (cont.)

Steinen about the Suya on the Xingú, in which he declares that these Indians knew how to use the pencil very well and drew beautiful motifs in his notebook, although he was the first white man they had seen (Karl von den Steinen, 1886, p. 212).

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Younger people are distinguished by a gift for rapid comprehension and an astonishing learning capacity. Although these Indians very rarely come in contact with caboclos, and in most cases only the men, both sexes have at their command a rather large store of Portuguese words and figures of speech. One little Surára boy about nine years old, Jubeauwō, also called Mandú, who had spent almost two years in the hut of the palm-fiber gatherer Manuel Antonio Gómez on the Rio Aracá, had a nearly perfect command of the Portuguese language and performed unique service as my interpreter. I owe it to him alone that I was able to penetrate more deeply into the mental culture of the Surára and Pakidái and put together a complete vocabulary (564).

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564. Three years ago the little boy suffered dangerous burns on the abdomen by an upset vessel containing boiling tree resin. Since the chief had given up hope that he would recover, he wanted to have him given the deathblow. The custom of this tribe, as well as that of the Pakidái, decrees that all old and seriously ill persons who are no longer able to take part in the general migrations must be killed (see pp. 153/154). The grandmother of the little boy, who is an orphan took him secretly one night to the hut of the Spanish palm-fiber gatherer,

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564. (cont.)

Manoel Antonio Gómez, who succeeded in saving his life. The chief was said to have been very angry at first over the arbitrary action of the grandmother, but then, when he saw that the little one had recovered, he calmed down.

- 123 Most men, after but a short time, had no difficulty handling
 ● 153 our two guns; a few were soon even operating the outboard
 [177] motor, and the Surára chief Hewemão, who showed great
 153 interest in my camera, took very acceptable pictures with it.
 The reasoning power seems to be somewhat more strongly de-
 veloped among the men than among the women (565).

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565. This conclusion agrees with an observa-
 tion by Baldus among the Tumerehã, and the
 scholar adds a remark which could also be ap-
 plied to the Surára and Pakidái: "The differ-
 ences in the talents of the sexes are perhaps
 the result of their way of life and division
 of labor. Thus, among the Tumerehã, the
 man's way of acquiring food has probably de-
 veloped his acuteness, for he does not merely
 gather fruits, like the woman, but also goes
 hunting..." (Baldus, 1931, p. 119).

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XII. Counting and Conception of Time

The Surára and Pakidái count only to three:

- 1 -- mahón
- 2 -- porokabō
- 3 -- prukatabō.